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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000591

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM IV](#)

SUBJECT: PDCI SAYS TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS IN 2008 A MUST,  
EVEN IF SOME VOTERS EXCLUDED

Classified By: PolEcon Section Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a September 2 meeting, PDCI (Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire) Secretary General Alphonse Djedje Mady told Ambassador that Cote d'Ivoire must hold elections in 2008. If it does not, the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) will be defunct and a new government framework will have to be installed. According to Mady, it is critical that elections are not marred by violence and that citizens freely cast their votes. However, he believes that elections can be credible as long as all political parties accept the electoral list, even if some voters cannot be registered in time before the election. End Summary.

#### Ethnicity's Link to Politics

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¶2. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's query about whether ethnicity and political parties are inextricably linked in Cote d'Ivoire, Mady said he believes that it is possible to overcome this historical connection. He noted that the Constitution forbids the establishment of political parties based on religion or ethnicity. Djedje Mady explained that Cote d'Ivoire's founding father, Felix Houphouet Boigny, said that the nation of Cote d'Ivoire had to be created over the course of generations. Mady believes that, while progress has been made on separating politics from ethnicity, much still needs to be done.

#### Meeting November 30 Date Challenging But Feasible

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¶3. (C) Mady told the Ambassador that the RHDP, the umbrella group of opposition parties of which he is the President, met with the Prime Minister, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), and the OPA Facilitator's Representative to express concern about meeting the November 30 election date in light of the delays in the identification and voter registration processes. Mady said that all interlocutors stated that enough cushion has been built into the election timeline to still permit observance of the November 30 date. Mady noted that if the parties responsible for organizing the election say that that November 30 date is viable, the political opposition cannot publicly state that it is not, even if they privately have doubts.

#### Must Have Elections in 2008

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¶4. (C) Mady said observance of the November 30 date is not crucial as long as the elections take place in 2008. According to Mady, President Laurent Gbagbo has no intention of holding elections before 2010, when he will have completed 2 terms of office. Mady said that this cannot be allowed. However, Mady told the Ambassador that the PDCI will accept a Gbagbo victory in free and fair elections.

15. (C) Ambassador asked Mady whether it would not be better to postpone elections until 2009 and have a thorough identification process rather than risk imperfect elections in 2008. Mady demurred, saying that Cote d'Ivoire needs a legitimately elected government sooner rather than later for the country to return to normalcy and for foreign investment to resume. He said that as long as 7-8 million voters are registered, the PDCI would be ready to go to elections. The transparency of the voting process, he said, is more important than the identification of every potential voter. Working from this assumption, Mady explained that credible elections could still be held in 2008, if all political parties agree to a new electoral list. The 2000 electoral list contained approximately 5 million voters and is already in the process of being updated. He implied that documenting voters from the 2000 list would be relatively simple. The key will be to add a sufficient number of new voters (those who were 18 in 2000, but were not registered and those who reached 18 since 2000) to arrive at a credible number of voters (which the PDCI puts at 7-8 million), even if every possible voter cannot be registered in time for an election in 2008.

16. (C) Ambassador asked Mady what will happen if elections are not held in 2008. Mady responded that the OPA will be defunct and a new government framework will have to be installed. His rationale is that the OPA calls for elections within a specific timeframe and that if the timeframe is not met, the accord is no longer valid.

#### Constitution Cannot Be Used to Delay Election

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17. (C) Ambassador noted that a local paper has highlighted the fact that the Constitution states that if the national territory is not intact, elections cannot be held. Ambassador asked Mady if he thought Gbagbo might use this constitutional provision to justify a postponement of the elections. Mady responded that this would not be possible because Gbagbo himself had declared that the war was over and the country reunited during the July 30, 2007 "Flame of Peace" ceremony in Bouake. Mady said Gbagbo cannot now argue that the country is not in fact united, especially since Prefects and sub-Prefects are in office in cities throughout the north.

18. (C) Comment. The fact that the entities organizing the election - the Prime Minister's Office and the CEI - have told the RHDP that the November 30 date is feasible explains why the political opposition has not been publicly critical of the delay in the commencement of the identification and voter registration processes. While Mady's argument that holding elections without a full registration of the nation's eligible voters is politically expedient, it may not pass muster with the Forces Nouvelles who carried out the rebellion to garner rights for formerly allegedly disenfranchised northerners. It is also unclear that UNOCI would be able to certify the electoral list. Most disturbing is Mady's assertion that the OPA will become null and void if elections are not held in 2008. Embassy is not sure that other parties would agree with this assessment (and will pursue the question) but if Mady is correct a termination of the OPA would be a major setback. The Forces Nouvelles could decide that they have no reason to continue to support the peace process or disarm, making a resumption of the rebellion and hostilities a real possibility.